

Paediatric surgery

Edited by P Puri and M Hollworth. Springer, 2006, £230.00, pp 632. ISBN 3-540-40738-3



It is necessary to establish at the outset of this review that I am a paediatric medicine trainee, in the second year of my core training (general/community paediatrics and tertiary neonates). When given the title my initial thoughts were very positive—surgical problems often arise in

general paediatrics and especially in neonatal practice. When this is the case it is expected that one has a little surgical knowledge on the presentation and initial management of a variety of surgical problems.

However as I glanced through the pages it soon became apparent, as the detailed surgical diagrams of operative procedures lay before me, that this text may not be for the general paediatrician. This was confirmed on closer inspection as the books preface clearly states that its aim is “to provide a comprehensive description of operative techniques for various conditions in children”.

This book covers a diverse range of conditions, which would be expected from any surgical text for children and has been written by an impressive range of authors assembled from around the world. It would appear that the subjects are generally constructed around anatomical region; however this becomes occasionally muddled and broader subject headings would certainly improve navigation around the 632 pages.

What is most likable about this book is that its focus is around the copious number of detailed diagrams of surgical procedures, which are used to communicate to the surgical trainee the practical fundamentals of each procedure, as well as some information on the care of the patient both before and after surgery. With each set of diagrams there is some accompanying text, which is minimal but adequate and provides added detail to the illustration.

I can see how this book would be useful in the formative years of training because to the untrained eye it covers the wide range of procedures encountered in everyday paediatric surgical practice. This is a “how to” reference

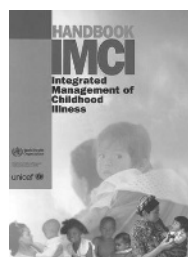
book and it could be envisaged that prior to entering theatre the trainee would consult this book in order to understand, assist and learn how to undertake the described procedure.

This is not a book for paediatricians but for those who are training to perform the described actions as the backbone of their future practice, and for that it would seem a most useful addition.

Jonathan W Davis

Handbook IMCI: integrated management of childhood illness

Edited by J Thomson and A Chavan. World Health Organization, 2005. £7.30 (paperback), pp 163. ISBN 92 4 154644 1



Integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI) is, for those who may not be familiar with the term, a WHO and UNICEF initiated strategy for the identification and management of the most common causes of childhood morbidity and mortality in the developing world. IMCI promotes improvement not only of health professionals' clinical management of cases but also of health systems and of family and community practices. The challenge is to disseminate these, undoubtedly laudable, systematic guidelines to health professionals all over our rather diverse world.

This book is an attempt to do just that. Written for those who teach health professionals this A4 sized manual (rather than handbook) is meant as a generic document for the world, various sections of which can be adapted to make the guidelines more locally relevant. The aim is to help tutors incorporate IMCI principles into their academic teaching programmes. An ambitious project and although some parts of it were useful, we felt that overall the WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development, which was responsible for putting it together, had tried to cover too much information for too

many people.

There is a guide at the front on how to adapt the handbook to both bring it into line with national protocols and allow it to fit in with local teaching/learning methods. Part I discusses the various charts needed for assessing the patient, classifying the severity of disease, and managing and arranging follow up for the child. This is where we hit the first problem. The handbook is supposed to be read/taught in conjunction with the relevant national IMCI chart booklet, which put us at an immediate disadvantage as reviewers because we did not have this booklet to refer to. Copies of the Management Charts are reproduced in one of the appendices but not the initial Assess and Classify Charts, to which there are frequent references.

Parts II and III discuss the assessment and classification of children in the age ranges 2 months to 5 years and then 1 week to 2 months. Parts IV and V describe, in quite a lot of detail, the management of children with breathing difficulties, diarrhoea, fever and/or an ear problem. The diagrams of signs such as nasal flaring, recession and meningism are, as with most WHO publications, excellent. The algorithms are very clear and nicely set out but then all the information is repeated in the text with some very basic paediatric “asides” thrown in for good measure. We found some of the text a bit patronising both towards the learner being taught this material and about the patients' mothers. More senior clinicians, including volunteer doctors and nurses trying to get to grips with IMCI principles, could be forgiven for thinking that they had come across a handbook aimed at untrained healthcare attendants or possibly quite junior medical students. Part VI deals with communication skills and Part VII makes some suggestions for follow up. IMCI is a commendable, evidence based, integrated and relatively simple system for managing childhood illness. However, we cannot help feeling that the authors seem to have strayed into the specifics of clinical management rather than their stated objective of helping tutors incorporate IMCI principles into academic programmes.

This book is not meant as a stand alone handbook for the clinician in the field. If you train health professionals for work in developing countries then we would recommend it as a useful generic resource—but be prepared to adapt the material for different groups of learners as well as different countries (and make sure you have your national IMCI chart booklet to hand!).

J Thomson, A Chavan

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